

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	14/03/2017
Unique reference number	1236771
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Hexagon Care Services Limited
Registered provider address	Hexagon Care Services, 1 Tustin Court, Port Way, Ashton on Ribble, Preston PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual	Louise Whitby
Registered manager	Lindsey Patterson
Inspector	Lisa Mulcahy

Inspection date	14/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

1236771

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The home should review its behaviour management and safeguarding strategies to ensure young people are appropriately safeguarded when incidents of significant challenging behaviour are displayed.
- Some impact risk assessments are not completed with full and accurate information. Consequently, the needs of young people already living in the home are not always fully considered or assessed before another young person moves into the home. However, the more recent impact risk assessments demonstrate an improvement despite the difficulties experienced by the home in obtaining relevant information from the placing local authority.
- The safe area risk assessment lacks information, so does not clearly assess all risks in the area. The assessment also lacks evaluation and strategies by which to manage the risks.
- Safer recruitment procedures have not been adhered to, which fails to safeguard young people and minimise any potential risks to them.
- Young people are not yet making progress in all areas of their lives since moving into the home.
- The home does not have clear transition plans in place for young people moving on from the home.
- Medication records are not clear and need to be strengthened.
- The recording systems in the home need to be strengthened. Some records lack relevant detail and are not always signed and dated by the author. Furthermore, some records lack the voice of the young person.
- The home has a system for staff to sign certain records to confirm that they have read them. However, some records do not demonstrate this.
- The records relating to staff and visitors present in the home are not always accurate.
- Staff supervision does not always take place in line with the home's supervision policy. Although this has improved recently, there needs to be firmer evidence that progress can be sustained.

The children's home strengths

- Young people are fully supported in relation to their education.
- Young people are supported to have regular positive contact with people who are important to them.
- Young people's health needs are met well.
- Young people benefit from a wide range of social and recreational activities with staff and peers and individually.
- Generally, the registered manager and staff have good relationships with the young people. When relationships have been strained, the registered manager has addressed this.
- Consultation with professionals and family members regularly takes place.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12: The protection of children standard (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure (a) that staff (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and protect each child effectively from harm; (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. Regulation 12(1)(2)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(b)(d)	31/08/2017

32: Fitness of workers The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that the individual is of integrity and good character, the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(3)(a)(b)(d))	31/08/2017
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- As well as longer-term support for children to move on from the home effectively (regulation 6(2)(b)(vi)), the home has an important role in supporting each child leaving the home in the period immediately before their departure. The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)
- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This includes supporting the child to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support, and, where the child is moving to live independently, practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27). In particular, they should have clear transition plans in place for young people who are moving on.
- Children's homes should work closely with the placing authority to understand the child's relationship history and the impact that the child's arrival may have on

the group living in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.3)

- Expectations of standards of behaviour should be high for all staff and children in the home. These standards should be clear and unambiguous. Children should be supported to develop understanding and empathy towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed. The development of safe, stable and secure relationships with staff in the home should be central to the ethos of the home and support the development of secure attachments that, where appropriate, persist over time. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)
- Children should be encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents', supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2). In particular, supervision should take place in line with the frequency outlined in their supervision policy.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is one of several homes within a private organisation that provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

This is the first full inspection since the children's home opened.

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
This is the first inspection for the children's home since it opened. The home's statement of purpose outlines that it will offer young people a period of 16 weeks in the home for assessment and intervention before they move on. There are four young people living in the home. One young person was due to move on a few days prior to the inspection. However, his placement has been extended for a further four weeks, as he needs further intervention to enable him to have a successful transition home. The home's statement of purpose has been updated to reflect this change. Another young person is due to move on to semi-independent living imminently. It is concerning that a semi-independent placement has not yet been identified for him. The minutes of meetings relating to these two young people demonstrate that some work has taken place in relation to the young people having a successful transition from the home. However, this is limited. The home does not have clear transition plans for the young people. Consequently, young people are not fully supported to successfully move on from the home. The registered manager and staff support young people when they move into the home. Young people are able to visit the home prior to moving in, when appropriate. A young person visited the home during the inspection, and a member of staff spoke to her and her carers about the home. Young people are provided with a guide to the home prior to or immediately following their admission, so that they are aware of the ethos of the home, what they should expect from the staff and what is expected of them while they are living in the home. Records in the home demonstrate that young people are made aware of the policies and procedures in the home, such as the complaints procedure and the fire procedure, as soon as they arrive. The support and information that young people receive support their smooth transition into the home. Young people are making progress in some aspects of their lives. However, there was limited evidence in the home to demonstrate their overall progress since moving in. For example, one young person's placement plan has not been regularly reviewed. Some records lack sufficient detail of the young people's specific needs and progress, such as the substance misuse of one young person and the controlling behaviour of another. Thus, although young people are making progress in some areas of their lives, this is not evident in other areas. Young people are encouraged to build positive relationships with staff and other young people living in the home. This is supported by the staff spending time with the young people. Staff communicate well with young people. A young person said, 'Staff are nice. They listen to us and are fair with us.' The staff support and	

encourage young people to engage in a wide range of social and recreational activities, including going to the cinema, the swimming baths, the bowling alley, the beach and other local attractions. Often, the trips that staff and young people take together are educational in nature. For example, a member of staff spoke about visiting a nearby abbey with young people and spending time discussing the history of the abbey with them.

Positive behaviour by young people is responded to well in the home. Young people receive rewards for positive behaviour, including helping to keep their home clean and tidy, engaging well with professionals and doing well in their education. One young person and member of staff have had some difficulties in their relationship, which resulted in them both becoming frustrated. The registered manager dealt with this effectively by speaking to each of them separately and then arranging a mediation session with them together. Although this only occurred a few days ago, their relationship appears to have improved.

Young people are encouraged to attend the weekly young people's meetings. These meetings provide the young people with the opportunity to discuss issues relating to the home and for staff to respond to their wishes and feelings. Furthermore, these meetings enable staff and young people to discuss issues that may affect them, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. A member of staff said, 'I was surprised at how much the young people knew about radicalisation.' In this way, young people's meetings enable young people to share their views, wishes and feelings about the home and to raise their awareness of issues that may impact on them. This provides them with a greater understanding on how to keep themselves safe from harm.

The registered manager and staff value the importance of education for young people. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend education regularly, and this is supported by their having a clear structure and routine to their days. For example, young people are woken in the mornings in plenty of time for them to wash and have breakfast before going to school. This is achieved by their having good bedtime routines and a settled environment at night. Young people are also supported to complete their homework and to engage in educational activities with staff. In addition to this support, the registered manager and staff regularly communicate with education professionals to ensure that young people are receiving the most appropriate education support. Since some young people who had previously not been attending education regularly have moved into the home, their attendance has improved considerably. Furthermore, the home is supporting another young person to look for alternative training opportunities because he lacked motivation in his college course and it was not meeting his needs. The support and encouragement that young people receive in relation to their education means that their education needs are met and they are making progress with their education.

The health needs of young people are met well in the home. The registered manager and staff encourage young people to adopt healthy lifestyles by having healthy meals, walking regularly and having fresh air. Individual health needs are

well understood and managed by staff, and clear risk assessments are in place, relating to the young person's health and well-being. For example, one young person has asthma and there is a risk assessment in place outlining the practice that staff and the young person should adopt to manage this effectively. Furthermore, medication records relating to this demonstrate that his medication is given as prescribed by his general practitioner. Each young person has a health plan in place, based on their individual health needs. Consequently, the health needs of young people are met well, and their overall health and well-being are promoted in the home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain regular positive contact with people who are important to them. Contact plans for young people are clear and ensure that safe, good-quality contact takes place with their families and friends. Following an incident occurring during one young person's contact with a family member, when the family member felt threatened by the young person, his contact plan was reviewed and changed to ensure that safeguards were in place for both the young person and his family member. This resulted in all contact taking place in the children's home so that staff were able to intervene if necessary. I was able to observe staff intervening appropriately during a contact session at the home, when it was clearly needed, as the contact was not positive. Another young person was having contact with an older friend whom professionals knew little about. The registered manager ensured that appropriate checks were in place to ascertain that the contact was safe. Furthermore, she challenged the local authority when it had agreed to the young person maintaining this contact despite the appropriate checks not being undertaken. This practice ensures that all contact that the young people have is safe and productive.

The home is furnished and decorated to a good standard, and there are lots of photographs of the young people engaging in activities. One young person showed the inspector around the home, and he and another young person proudly showed the inspector their bedrooms, which were clean and tidy. They were personalised with the young people's personal belonging and photographs. The home environment offers young people a safe, secure and nurturing place to live.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Safeguarding practice within the home requires greater scrutiny to ensure that	

young people are always safeguarded in accordance with policy and procedure.

Although risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated, they lack detail and do not outline the strategies in place to manage all known risks for young people. Furthermore, the risk assessments do not demonstrate that consultation has taken place with the young person in relation to the risks to them. Consequently, risk assessments do not ensure that the staff are able to safeguard young people and that young people are able to keep themselves safe.

An incident occurred in the home in which a young person was able to prevent staff from leaving the kitchen or call for assistance as the young person had taken the telephone from them. The staff were unable to fulfil their duties during this time, which had the potential to place other young people at risk. There was some understanding of the potential safeguarding and behaviour management concerns in relation to this incident. However, the consequence for this incident was not sufficiently restorative in nature to ensure learning for the young person and to prevent a further incident of this nature. A notification was not made to Ofsted, although this was considered and the rationale for not doing so appropriately shared with the inspector. The home should review its behaviour management and safeguarding strategies in order to offer assurance that such incidents are not repeated and that young people are appropriately safeguarded in such circumstances.

The home does not always appropriately assess the games that young people play on their games console in the home. One young person played an inappropriate 18-plus game in the presence of another young person in the period prior to the inspection. The game was appropriately returned to the young person's family. However, records need to be clearer to ensure that the games that young people have in the home are regularly monitored, to ensure that young people are always safeguarded from accessing inappropriate material in the home.

The home completes impact risk assessments prior to young people moving into the home. However, some of these assessments lack sufficient information to enable the home to assess whether the home is suitable to meet the needs of the young person or the impact that the placement will have on the young people already living in the home. The more recent impact risk assessments demonstrate an improvement despite the difficulties experienced by the home in obtaining relevant information from the placing local authority. The home needs to ensure that all impact risk assessments include all the relevant information to enable them to assess the suitability of placements and effectively assess the risk of harm to every young person.

The home has a safe area assessment in place. However, this does not include information from safeguarding professionals in the area. The registered manager has failed to follow up the request made for this information when she received a response. In addition, the safe area assessment does not include details of all known risks in the area, such as other children's homes, transport links and public

houses. There is little evaluation of the information contained in the safe area assessment to inform of the impact that this would have on young people being placed in the home or the young people already living in the home. Thus, young people are not fully safeguarded from all risks in the area in which the home is located.

The records in the home relating to visitors and staff do not provide an accurate account of all people in the home at a given time. The visitors' book does not include details of all visitors who enter the home, and staff rotas do not reflect a change in a member of staff when a member of staff left their shift early and was replaced by another member of staff. However, the daily logbook does demonstrate this change. This omission places young people at risk.

Young people do not generally go missing from the home. However, this has been an issue for one young person. The home has managed this well and taken appropriate action to locate the young person and encourage him to return home. The relevant professionals and family members have been informed in a timely manner. When the young person has returned, he has been welcomed home. The home has liaised effectively with the missing from home coordinator. It has ensured that independent return interviews have taken place to give the young person the opportunity to discuss why he went missing and the risks and issues he faced while he was missing. The robust response to the missing episodes for the young person has contributed to a reduction in the missing from home episodes for him.

The medication records in the home demonstrate that medication is administered in accordance with young people's prescriptions. The staff clearly record when a young person has refused to take their prescribed medication or when it has been given by their parent during contact. One of the records relating to the stock taking of medication was unclear. However, this was rectified during the inspection. The records in relation to medication stock checks at staff handovers had some gaps. However, these were due to staff members doing additional shifts so there were no staff changes at normal handover times. The registered manager accepted that this was unclear so will take appropriate action to rectify this. Despite some of the records being unclear in relation to the safe administration of medication, the home ensures that medication is administered safely and in accordance with the stated prescription.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of	Requires improvement

leaders and managers	
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A suitably qualified and experienced registered manager is supported by a deputy manager to manage the home. The registered manager promotes the continuous professional development of the staff team by ensuring that staff have regular training and development opportunities. She is keen for staff to complete the company's mandatory training programme and an extensive range of other training and development opportunities to enhance their professional practice, such as radicalisation, e-safety, female genital mutilation, key working, social pedagogy, child development and child neglect. The majority of the staff team members have the suitable qualifications to fulfil their roles or are currently completing their qualifications. The training matrix and supervision records clearly demonstrate that staff receive regular training appropriate to their individual training needs. Thus, staff development is very much promoted in the home to enhance their knowledge and skills, professional practice and the quality of care provided to young people.

The monitoring and review systems in the home are a work in progress and some elements are robust, such as the external monitoring by the independent visitor employed by the company. However, further improvement is required in relation to the internal monitoring systems to enable the registered manager to have a clear overview of the home's strengths and weaknesses and to implement the relevant changes to address the shortfalls, such as the quality of recording in the home, safeguarding practice and behaviour management. The registered manager has developed a development plan that demonstrates her vision for the service and she undertakes a monthly review of the quality of care. However, this needs to be strengthened to ensure continuous improvement in the home.

The home is operating in accordance with its statement of purpose, which clearly outlines the ethos and philosophy of the home, 'According to the individual needs of each young person, the aim of X House is to allow children and young people to develop positive relationships with a high emphasis on life-enriching opportunities and activities; accept measures to reduce negative behaviour and develop strategies to cope with situations. The primary aim is to create an environment of constant warmth, predictability and responsiveness to need with the opportunity for young people to experience new relationships through positive adult/child and peer group interactions.' The statement of purpose is regularly updated to reflect the changes to the service since it opened.

There are some deficits in the recruitment of staff that need to be addressed in the home. Although references have been obtained for all staff, the verification of these is not robust. Verification records have significant gaps in them and do not correlate with the dates of employment for one member of staff. The gaps in education / employment for one member of staff have not been identified or addressed as part of the recruitment procedures in the home. The shortfalls in staff recruitment do not demonstrate safe recruitment practice, which does not ensure that young people are safeguarded.

Partnership working between the registered manager, the staff and other professionals is good. They have developed effective relationships with support workers for young people, which ensure that the young people are receiving a good level of support from them. Furthermore, the relationships that the registered manager and staff have developed with education professionals mean that young people are receiving a good level of education and making progress in their education. A young person has recently started to receive regular intervention from a substance misuse worker to address his concerning substance misuse. The substance misuse worker said, 'The staff keep me updated on issues relating to the young person and have been proactive in getting the right support for him to address his substance misuse.' The worker is also planning to attend a team meeting to undertake some holistic therapies with the staff team. However, the registered manager spoke about her frustration at times with the difficulty that she has contacting some professionals, in particular placing social workers. The registered manager believes that this has hindered the home's planning for a young person moving out of the home.

The home has developed a system by which it regularly consults with professionals and family members. The consultation records in the home demonstrate effective professional relationships. Professionals and family members have an extremely positive view of the home and the work that the staff do to support young people. A professional said, 'The staff are committed to the young people and are always there for them.' A family member gave the home 10 out of 10 and said, 'It is a fantastic home.' This positive consultation enables the registered manager and staff to build on the good work that they do and work on any identified areas for improvement.

Staff handovers are thorough and well recorded, which ensures a good transition from one staff team to another and provides young people with consistency in working practices. Staff are supported through regular team meetings that enable them to discuss issues as a team and to reflect on their practice and the quality of care that they provide to the young people. Although there have been some gaps in the frequency of staff supervision, which has not been in line with the company's supervision policy, this has improved recently. The quality of supervision is good as it allows staff to reflect on their practice and to consider how it can be improved. However, not all actions set at supervision sessions are followed up at subsequent sessions. Therefore, there is the potential for the supervisors to be unaware of the member of staff's progress in relation to certain actions and for actions not to be addressed. Consequently, the required improvement in professional practice or the quality of care may not be made.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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